

VZCZCXRO4698  
PP RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN  
DE RUEH KI #1521 2721148  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 291148Z SEP 06  
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4882  
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE  
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS KINSHASA 001521

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: CAMPAIGN OPENS FOR DR CONGO'S PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY  
ELECTIONS

¶1. (U) Campaigning officially began at midnight September 28 for the DRC's provincial assembly elections. The 11 assemblies constitute a new level of government for the DRC, and are granted considerable authority under its new constitution. The new DRC constitution stipulates that the central government return 40 percent of national revenues to the provinces to utilize as they see fit.

¶2. (U) The assemblies will be responsible for day-to-day provincial administration, including creation of provincial development plans, managing public debt and finances, organizing and controlling cross-border commerce, and implementation of mining programs, among other responsibilities. They will also element members of the national Senate as well as provincial governors and vice-governors.

¶3. (U) The campaign will run for 30 days, ending at midnight on October 27. According to the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), a total of 13,467 candidates are running for the 632 seats throughout the country. Transitional President Joseph Kabila's People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD) is fielding the most candidates with 620, although 678 candidates are registered as independents. Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba's Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) and Vice President Azarias Ruberwa's Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) have put forward 588 and 586 candidates, respectively.

¶4. (U) Provisional results are expected by December 5. According to the new constitution, each of the 11 assemblies will be installed 15 days after the publication of provisional results anticipated on December 20. Final results will be announced in mid-February, after appellate courts have ruled on any challenges. An additional 58 representatives will be appointed to the assemblies from among traditional local leaders.

¶5. (U) The assemblies are scheduled to select candidates to fill the 108-seat Senate on December 29, followed by election of the 11 governors and 11 vice-governors in January 16.

¶6. (U) Comment: Provincial assembly elections remain for now overshadowed by the presidential run-off, which will also be held October 29. Only a handful of banners have been hung along the boulevards of Kinshasa's central business district. End comment.

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